

DESIRABLE TYPOLOGIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN QUALITY MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION. COMMUNICATIONAL FINDINGS

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Abstract. *The authors of this article present the findings of a longitudinal research carried out in the years 2007 and 2008 in a production and service company active in the food & beverages industry. The goal of the research was to identify the one model of organizational culture perceived by the employees as the most appropriate for an efficient implementation of a quality management system. The research method used was the enquiry based on the questionnaire. The methodological means chosen was the Culture Type Identification Questionnaire developed by Charles Handy (1983) based on the typology elaborated by Roger Harrison. The analysis and interpretation of the obtained data converge towards the more general thesis according to which the diagnosis of the pre-existing culture type in a changing organization, correlated with the identification of the model the employees strive for, facilitates the process of adopting a new attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral pattern, in a relatively homogeneous and tension-free approach. Specifically, the research has confirmed the hypothesis according to which the type of task-oriented culture is more appropriate with the quality management desiderata, and the transition from an entrepreneurial culture to a quality-oriented corporative one strongly depends on what the employees perceive as being the real and the ideal state, and not on a formal infusion of values, norms, principles, policies or organizational strategies.*

Keywords: organizational culture, communication, quality management, Charles Handy's typology, human resources, behavior, organizational change.

1. Introduction

The creation, design and implementation of a management system based on quality principles represents a holistic effort of organizational diagnosis and intervention. One of the most delicate analysis and intervention study processes is the one centered upon the organizational culture. Therefore, the present article aims to state that the implementation of a quality oriented organizational culture is not being achieved through replacement strategies, but is conditioned by the existing culture type configuration and by the employees' perception of the ideal model, formally prescribed by the quality strategy developed by the management. In order to achieve

this goal, we have used a composite methodology – studies of the field literature and the enquiry based on the questionnaire.

Quality management is strongly connected to the degree of satisfaction an organization provides. This affects all components of an organization: individuals, structure, technology and culture, the way reality is perceived by the employees, the way labor tasks and situations are being tackled with (Cole, 2000). The basic principals of quality management such as customer orientation, mutually beneficial relationships to suppliers and clients, the continuous improvement of products and services, the holistic, systemic and process-based approach of management, orienting the staff towards quality or leadership can both influence and transform values, norms, vision and mission of the organization, the group attitudes and behaviors, in other words, the component elements of the organizational culture (Goetsch and Davis, 2008; Summers, 2008). The organizational culture lays certain rules of employees behavior through its elements, thus orienting the way in which employees perceive and represent the organizational reality and the „right” way to react to changes. The organizational culture is a set of presumptions shared and learned by a group (a social unit with a common history) in order to solve the issues raised by internal and external adjustment, presumptions which have survived long enough to be validated and forwarded to new members (Schein, 2004; Stanciu and Ionescu, 2005). The culture can be methodologically perceived and investigated by appealing to its displays: regular behaviors visible with individual interaction (language, customs and traditions, rituals), group norms (default standards and values which are being developed within working groups), adopted values, formal philosophy (principles, policies), game rules, climate (interaction manner, environment) competencies passed from one generation to the next, patterns of thinking, mental models, linguistic paradigms (shared cognitive frameworks, common language), metaphors and symbols (the way group members described themselves, material symbols); rituals and ceremonies (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Ionescu, 2008; Schein, 2004). Implementing a quality oriented organizational culture implies interventions and echoes at all above mentioned levels. Especially because the forces arising from culture in various social and organizational situations are extremely powerful.

Culture is a phenomenon with a high, unconscious and silent impact. Therefore, if the development of a strategy focused on quality management is based on economic imperatives, its achievement involves undergoing a range of sociological and psychological processes which, managed without a prior diagnosis, can compromise the assumed purposes. In this context, we have developed a research approach focused on the organizational culture. Its goal was to determine the possibilities to configure a culture appropriate to the implementation of quality management in a product and services company.

Based on the studies of the quality management field literature, we have structured a set of principles, values and characteristics towards which a quality oriented organizational culture should pertain to: well performed tasks, stimulation of internal competition, the climate of trust and innovation in order to improve quality,

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optimization of staff actions by improving internal communication, barriers elimination, collaboration, transparency, flexible work rules aiming improvement, stimulating employees proportionally to the quality of the work performed, development of strategies and personnel policies aiming for the increasing of interest in permanent employee training, involving all employees, maintaining internal and external customer satisfaction, high attachment and organizational commitment, teamwork, position and role flexibility, customer satisfaction by results improvement, customer relationship management (Deming, 1986; Evans and Lindsay, 2007).

Starting from these principles and features of quality-oriented culture, the next step was to perform a research on a company that has undergone an organizational change generated by the introduction of a quality management system along with its takeover by a multinational corporation. We have settled for a longitudinal case study, the basic element being the evolutionary evaluation of the investigated phenomenon over a period of time.

2. Research methodology

The research design was a longitudinal and quantitative one (Alasuutari and others, 2008), allowing classification and statistical analysis of the scoring obtained by applying the tests used. We used series of frequencies and the t-test for statistical analysis of the data. The statistical processing of raw data was performed with SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) 10.0 application.

The research subjects were the employees of a food & beverages industry company: 27 women and 37 men, aged between 21 and 48 years. The data collection was performed after applying a questionnaire in two distinctive phases, the first in 2007 and the second in 2008. The goal of the questionnaire was to identify the most appropriate type of culture for implementing a quality management system.

The targeted research objectives were: establishing the type of the existing organizational culture, determining the organizational culture perceived as most suitable to quality management by the employees, in terms of expectations and detecting the perception of the employees of the ideal model in two different moments – 2007 and 2008.

The general study presumption was that the company's transition to a quality oriented management should reflect in the organizational culture. The specific formulated hypothesis was: if the *task oriented culture* is the most appropriate basis for quality management, then the employees will choose this model, at least at the level of their expectancies; if the current culture of the organization strong and homogeneous, then a quality oriented culture will be silently achieved in time.

For the research conducted in 2007, the number of selected subjects was 64 people, company employees for more than 4 years. For the research conducted in 2008, the seniority was lower than 4 years, as the organization faced large staff fluctuations at the end of 2007. In the first stage of the research, the demographic structure of the group of subjects was as follows: 25% of subjects aged between 18-25

years, 66% between 26-35 years, 9% between 36-45, of whom 42% were male and 58% women.

In the second phase, 9% subjects were aged between 18-25, 78% – between 26-35 and 13% – between 36-45; the percentage in gender distribution was maintained. The subjects were chosen from all departments: Production, Laboratory, Sales and Marketing, Purchasing, Finance and Logistics.

The methodological means used was the culture type identification questionnaire developed by Charles Handy (1983), which aimed to detect the opinions of employees regarding the organizational culture of the company they work for. In developing its model, Handy started from the following theoretical framework: there are beliefs (more or less powerful) and customs related to these beliefs within the different types of organizational cultures. These refer to various organizational issues, which become both dimensions and questionnaire items. The author of the questionnaire bases his theoretical model on the organizational research of Roger Harrison, who identifies four types of organizational cultures: the power-oriented culture, the role-oriented culture, the task-oriented culture, the person-oriented culture. Charles Handy nominated 15 dimensions, put across in the form of 15 items:

- the type of „boss“;
- the type of „well-behaved subordinate“;
- the way of determining company priorities by its employee;
- the type of employee promoted within the organization;
- the way the organization treats its members;
- exerting control and influence within the organization;
- the task distribution;
- employee motivation in accomplishing tasks;
- teamwork;
- the team competition;
- dealing and managing conflicts;
- decisions making;
- communication and control structure within the organization;
- ways of responding to external environment.

Four variants of responses were listed for each item: first variant corresponds to the power-oriented culture, the second to a role-oriented culture, the third relates to the task-oriented culture and the last concerns a person-oriented culture. The subjects answer each question by taking in consideration a real and an ideal level in order to assess both the formal and informal dimensions. The scoring is calculated individually. The scores for each type of culture (for each construct) are summed up and the final result is four different scores for the four different types of culture. The lowest score corresponds to the type of culture frequently perceived as real/ideal; the highest score is the rough score for the type of culture at least familiar/desired by the subject. In the present research, we asked subjects to refer, on one hand, to the situation perceived as present/real and, on the other hand, to the situation perceived as ideal for a quality-oriented culture within the organization. This request was motivated

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by our interest to determine the most appropriate type of culture employees wish for with regard to quality management systems. The goal of this approach was to enable an easier future implementation of the cultural changes necessary in order to orient the employees towards quality, based on their expectancies.

3. Results and comments

The company we conducted the research on is part of a multinational group. Its declared mission is focused on high quality production and services for consumers, customers and the community. The values promoted by the company and considered to be of critical importance for a quality management are: respect, integrity, communication and excellence. The company principles join the same logic: „the care for customers, consumers and community”, „to sell only the products that we are proud of”, „to openly tell the truth”, „to balance short-term objectives with long-term objectives”, „to win through diversity and inclusion”, and „to respect the others and make it together”.

In the first phase, in 2007, the scoring results revealed the fact that the present/real organizational culture type was the role-oriented one. The least appropriate culture was considered the person-oriented one. The highest rough score was obtained by the role-oriented culture (965), based on the perception of the present company culture. On the same level, the power-oriented culture was positioned on the second rank, showing an important weighting in the perception of the subjects, with a rough score of 1091. The task-oriented culture was positioned on the third rank with a score of 1200.

The important weighting of role-oriented culture and its positioning on the third rank of the task-oriented culture shows that the subjects were not able to identify as dominant the elements of quality culture. At the moment when the research was conducted, the investigated population still preserved the perceptions of the real culture, valid before the moment when the change decision was adopted. Interesting however is the fact that, from the ideal perspective, the expectancies of the subjects place the task-oriented culture on the second rank, which is closer to quality (1051). This, although it still polarizes with a similar score (928) towards the role-oriented culture and marks the existence of a correspondence between the types of culture perceived as being real and ideal. In conclusion, one may state that although there is a real and an ideal crystallization of the organizational culture around the role-oriented type of culture, from the perspective of their expectancies, the employees also tend to project and place themselves in a type of culture based on quality management.

The analysis of the scores obtained on the various departments indicates that the employees working in the departments of Laboratory, Logistics, Marketing, Sales, representing 57% of the subjects, perceive the role-oriented culture as the most representative one. The employees working in the departments of Purchasing, Finance and Production consider the power-oriented culture (43%) to be most representative. This weighting indicates a division of the employees' perception in two defining trends which certainly have an important role in the dynamics of the organizational

culture. From the ideal perspective, the Purchasing, Finance, Logistics, Marketing and Production departments polarize highly on the role-oriented culture, with a weighting of 86%; only 14% of the employees of these departments perceive the task-oriented culture as the most suitable on the level of their expectancies.

In the second phase of the study (2008) the data related to the perception of the present/real culture indicates the steadiness of the trend noted in the first part of the research regarding the role-oriented culture which registered a significant rough score – 853, *as it seems to fit the best*. The trend of the power-oriented culture was also constant.

The analysis on the data received from the various departments in the second stage of the research offered new perspectives in understanding the dynamics of the organizational culture within the company. Thus, an important change of perception within the departments was noticed: 86% of the subjects working in the departments of Logistics, Laboratory, Marketing and Sales perceive the present culture as a role-oriented one, compared with a percentage of only 57% of subjects in the first stage of the research.

From the perspective of the ideal culture, the surprising element is the crystallization of a new trend in terms of subjects expectations, namely, *the task-oriented culture* (820). It can thus be asserted that, in comparison to the data obtained in the first stage, the change of perception towards the task-oriented culture is a new element, which can, in its turn, lead to a new dynamic in the evolution of organizational culture towards quality.

Making a comparison with the t-test, it could be observed that the process of change researched at two distinctive moments in the life of the organization is still ongoing. Also, the data analysis presenting the dynamics of this process indicates that the cultural change is most difficult to achieve: from the perspective of the present culture perception, the subjects opted for the role oriented-culture both in 2007 and in the second phase in 2008 (table no. 1). From the point of view of their preferences, *i.e.*, the ideal situation, the subjects scored positively for the task-oriented culture, closer to the quality management. Based on the obtained data, it can be asserted that organizational culture of the company presented a high degree of homogeneity and consistency towards the role-oriented culture in the period prior to the moment of change. This state of fact was demonstrated by the data obtained both in the first and second phase of the research study. This can be explained by the fact that a change in the perception of a present situation is difficult to induce and to be achieved, so that the task-oriented culture, as a defining element of the quality management, is still perceived as belonging to the ideal/expectance level.

All the data emphasize that the organizational culture of the company before the moment of change has an increased degree of homogeneity and consistency to the role culture, a fact confirmed by the data presented in both the first and the second part of the research. This can be explained by the fact that the change of perception about the current situation is difficult and a culture of task as a culture of quality is perceived as taking from the ideal/expectancies level.

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Table 1

Comparison between the results obtained in 2007 and 2008 over the real and ideal culture

Pairs	Types of cultures	Differences according to pairs		
		Mean	Standard deviation	t-test
Pair 1	Present power 07 Present power 08	-0,74	1,45	-2,44
Pair 2	Present role 07 Present role 08	2,65	4,29	2,964*
Pair 3	Present task 07 Present task 08	-0,61	1,41	-2,077
Pair 4	Present person 07 Present person 08	-1,3	3,48	-1,796
Pair 5	Ideal power 07 Ideal power 08	-8,70	0,42	-1
Pair 6	Ideal role 07 Ideal role 08	-3,78	7,21	2,516*
Pair 7	Ideal task 07 Ideal task 08	7,13	5,82	5,878*
Pair 8	Ideal person 07 Ideal person 08	-3,26	5,13	-3,05

* The correlation is significant t the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The importance of the Marketing, Sales and Logistics departments in terms of the internal policy perspective is very important to stress at this point. The fact that the Sales and Marketing departments share a common representation of the organizational culture is a relevant both for the company dynamics and for the future trends, taking in consideration the fact that the strategies and commercial policies of the company are defined by the two departments. To these two, the Logistic department could be added, as the structure which practically and operationally applies the actual strategy. The present data underline the political importance of the commercial departments, which, unlike the other departments, can „impose” a policy or their policy at the level of the whole organization. They can become important power engines for attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral changes, especially due to the fact that they are already oriented towards task-oriented culture at the level of their expectancies.

Conclusions

The research has confirmed the general and specific assumptions. The cultural change is the most difficult to achieve, but the fact that there was no withstanding towards radical changes (see the results for the ideal situation) or a denial of the new strategy indicates the fact that there is a planned and smooth approach of strategic implementation of the quality management, although the organizational culture prior

to the moment of change still exists at the present level. The new cultural and management style are known and accepted at the level of expectance by the employees who have undergone this process, while the elements of anxiety, which normally accompany all processes of change are not to be found in this case.

Thus, from the perspective of the expectancies, the new trend noticed in the second part of the research – the preference for the task-oriented culture – could orient the organization towards this type of culture, which certainly means a dynamics generated by the quality management. This trend is predictable, as this type of culture is preferred by all the departments. The congruence is to be found in a semi-unitary form both with the commercial departments and with the operational ones. If the transition from a cultural type to another was well planned, and the fears and withstanding towards change were overcome, then the change in the planned direction is a realistic one.

To conclude, it is our opinion that this diagnosis study can be useful in defining quality policies and strategies in any company, taking especially in consideration the human resources component. Furthermore, we consider that the study can facilitate the understanding of the inherent dynamics of the process of change in the organizational culture, taking in consideration the fact that the new local and global economic opportunities merge towards the idea according to which the scenario of quality management system is not an isolated one.

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